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ABSTRACT

Many questions about how couples construe violence between intimate partners remain unanswered. In order to examine the "labeling" of violence, attitudes about intimate violence, and victims' reactions to assault, 125 undergraduate students completed a three-part questionnaire, including a Battering Empathy Scale (BES), a section assessing the respondent's personal history as victim or abuser, and evaluation, perception, and attribution questions concerning a hypothetical scenario involving intimate partner violence. Analysis of respondents' labeling of intimate violence showed that most respondents (victims, abusers, or both) were unwilling to apply the label to themselves; those who have suffered more serious physical injury were more willing to use the label battering; and the use of force (and its consequences) affected respondents' labeling in the scenario. BES responses showed that those who were both victims and abusers had lower victim empathy than others (victims, abusers, neither). The degree of resistance offered by the victim in the violence scenario affected respondents' identification with the victim, assignments of responsibility to the victim, perceptions of the victim's control, and attributions about the abuser's intelligence and motivation. (The Battering Empathy Scale and numerous data tables are included). (BH)

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Violence Between Intimate Partners:

Calling it "Battering" and Allocating Blame

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Paper presented at the Second National Conference for Family Violence Researchers, Durham, New Hampshire, August 7, 1984.

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Violence Between Intimate Partners:

Calling it "Battering" and Allocating Blame

Despite the rapidly growing literature concerned with violence between intimate partners, many questions about how couples construe these events remain unanswered. The study I will report had three main goals: The first purpose was to uncover the dynamics of "labelling" in this context, i.e., when will a person regard a given episode as "battering"? Little is presently known on this point, yet such labelling may be a critical prerequisite to helpseeking. The second aim was to identify how general attitudes about intimate violence may relate to one's own personal experiences and how such pre-existing attitudes may affect evaluations of specific episodes. Speculations about the plausibility of these connections abound, but to date there has been little empirical grounding for them. Finally, the third goal of the research was to determine how the victim's reactions to an assault (i.e., whether nonviolent or violent) modify observers' evaluations and perceptions of the violent episode. Since violent couple relationships typically involve violence by both parties (cf. Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), this point would appear to be critical to an understanding of how blame is allocated in most circumstances of intimate violence.

Method

Subjects. Undergraduate volunteers from introductory psychology classes at Iowa State University participated for experimental credit. On signing up for the study, subjects were told that they would be asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire on their (1) attitudes and knowledge, (2) personal experiences, and (3) impressions and judgments of case studies regarding both physical aggression between intimates and episodes of forced sex.

The final sample of 125 who completed questionnaires was comprised of 68 males (54.4%) and 57 females (45.6%). Participants were largely Causasian (85.6%), with only small percentages of Black (4%), Oriental (4%), Hispanic (2.4%), and Amerind students (0.8%), (the remaining 3.2% did not indicate any classification).

The 19-20 year-old age range predominated the sample (49.6%), with substantial proportions falling in the 21-22 year (34%) and 17-18 year (14.4%) ranges, as well. Although the average ages for male and female respondents did not differ, the genders were distributed differently, since females tended to be over-represented in the youngest and oldest groupings, while males predominated in the mid-ranges, as shown in Figure 1.

Instrument. Respondents completed a three-part questionnaire, containing a total of 193 multiple-choice and 36 short-answer questions, many of which were only applicable contingent on answers to prior questions. The questionnaire addressed the topic of forced sex as well, but this report will focus only on those questions concerned with violence between intimate partners (a total of 93 multiple-choice and 8 short-answer questions). Part I included the 17-question "Battering Empathy" scale given in Table 1, which assesses general attitudes about violence between intimates. This scale was developed specifically for the present study and was modeled after the Rape Empathy Scale (RES), developed by Deitz (1982). Also in Part I were two questions on the expected likelihood of the respondent being a victim or assailant in a violent encounter with an intimate partner in the future. Part II contained two subsections assessing the respondent's personal history as victim or as actor in physically abusive episodes with an intimate partner. Persons who reported such experiences indicated the nature and length of the relationship, the types of abuse and injury that

had occurred, and rated the extent to which they regarded the behavior as "battering." Part III of the questionnaire presented a "case study" involving intimate-partner violence. This was a brief hypothetical scenario which systematically varied three dimensions of the situation in 8 different versions in a 2x2x2 design: (1) the introductory Instructions (Standard vs. Empathy Instructions), (2) the Force used by the abusive partner (High vs. Low), and the victim's physical response to the assault (High vs. Low Resistance). The specific scenario used is given in Table 2 together with the alternative texts used in manipulating the three factors. Each participant was given only one scenario, with approximately equal numbers of the different questionnaire versions distributed within participants of a given gender. Following the scenario in Part III were a variety of evaluation, perception, and attribution questions, as discussed in detail in the description of the results.

Results and Discussion

Two major limitations of the project should be born in mind throughout this discussion. First, the fact that the sample was a self-selected one means that frequencies and correlations may not be generalizable beyond this group and that this group may have been especially sensitive (or insensitive) to the dimensions that were varied in the scenarios. Second, because the findings reported here are based on questions embedded in a longer questionnaire which also asked about the issue of forced sex, and because embedding the violence questions in this context may have influenced responses to them in ways that cannot be determined here, this project is best regarded as a pilot study and should be confirmed by replication in future research where intimate violence is the sole focus of the questions asked.

Experiences with Intimate Violence. Nearly one-fourth (24%) of the overall respondent sample reported personal experiences with violence in an intimate relationship: 10% solely as victims, 6% solely as abusers, and 8% as both victims and abusers. Female participants more frequently reported themselves to be victims (15.8% of females, vs. 5.9% of males), whereas greater proportions of males were involved only as abusers (7.4% of males vs. 3.5% of females) or as both victim and abuser (13.2% males vs. 1.8% females), as shown in Figure 2.

Reflecting the young, independent, and predominantly unmarried status of this undergraduate sample, the great majority of those who experienced intimate violence did so in dating relationships (80%), as opposed to relationships with cohabiting partners (6.7%), spouses (3.3%), ex-spouses (3.3%), or parents (6.7%).

Although many of those who had experiences with Both victim and abuser roles had evidently been involved in reciprocal physical abuse with a single partner, some reported their victim experiences in connection with one relationship and their abuser experiences in another. For this reason, it is necessary to distinguish between the reports given by Both-role respondents regarding their victim experiences (Both/V) and those associated with their abuser experiences (Both/A).

Overall, one-third (33%) who had experiences with violence were still in the abusive relationship, although this proportion varied markedly depending on the respondent's role in the violence: only 8% of Victim, and 29% of Abuser, but 70% of Both/V and 56% of Both/A relationships were on-going at the time of the study. Not only were Victims and Abusers less likely to still be in their violent relationships, but their relationships were also shorter in duration and the violence occurred less frequently than for re-

spondents with Both role experiences. These patterns are evident in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 indicates that the majority of Victims' and Abusers' violent relationships had been of less than a year in duration, whereas greater proportions of those with Both experiences continued the violent relationships longer, wither one considers their victim experiences (Both/V) or their abuser experiences (Both/A) as the basis for comparison. Figure 4 shows that Victims and Abusers typically experienced the violence only once, whereas a greater proportion of those with a history of Both roles experienced violence more frequently ("every few months" typified the Both/V reports, and "monthly" predominated in the Both/A reports).

The most serious injury a respondent reported suffering (as victim) or inflicting (as abuser) was classified into one of four categories: none, objects only (torn clothing, broken glasses), minor personal injury (scrapes, splinters, small bruises), and moderate personal injury (medium bruises, cuts, twisted wrists). The results for the different experience groups, given in Figure 5, indicate that large proportions of all groups deny there was any injury as a result of the violence, although some differences are apparent. Abusers most strongly deny inflicting any injury, whereas only reports of a respondent's own victimization (i.e., Victim and Both/V groups) referred to cases of moderate personal injury.

In summary, the sample of participants included a substantial minority with personal experiences in violent dating relationships, and groupings of respondents based on their roles in the violence revealed both qualitative and quantitative differences in their experiences in other respects. Specifically, respondents who had been <u>both</u> victim and abuser tended to have longer violent relationships, were more likely to still be in their violent relationships, and reported more frequent occurrence of violent episodes compared with

persons who had been only victims or only abusers. Reports of the maximum injury differed along the abuser/victim dimension, with only victims reporting moderately serious consequences and abusers more frequently denying any injurious results of their actions.

Battering Empathy. Simple totals were obtained on the 17-item Battering Empathy Scale (BES), (with reverse-scores used on the items indicated in Table 1), so scores could theoretically range from 17 to 153. The actual scores obtained by this group of participants represented a broad spectrum of the potential spread, ranging from 70 to 150 points. Coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951) was .796 for the item set, demonstrating an acceptable degree of internal consistency for the BES. Item-total correlations further showed that all items should be retained in the instrument.

Because a Sex X Battering Experiences classification of respondents resulted in a design with only one individual in the Female/Both-roles cell, the effects of these two factors on Battering Empathy were assessed in separate ANOVAs. Females were found to have significantly higher BES scores than males ($\bar{X}_f = 123.3$, $\bar{X}_m = 116.1$; $F(1,123) = 5.784$, $p < .05$). Comparisons on individual scale items revealed that these differences derived primarily from females' significantly higher empathy on items 1, 2, 8, 10, and 17.

Battering empathy also differed significantly across the four experience groups, as shown in Figure 6 ($F(3,121)=4.998$, $p < .01$). Scheffé tests of pairwise differences revealed that respondents who had experienced Both roles were significantly less empathetic than each of the other three groups, but that there were no significant differences in empathy among Victims, Abusers, or those with no experiences of violence in intimate relationships.

In summary, the results for the BES measure were both expected and surprising. The fact that females obtained higher BES scores parallels the

pattern of sex differences on Deitz's RES (1982), after which the present scale was patterned. One might, however, have expected that persons with experiences as Victims in situations of intimate violence would evidence greater empathy on the BES than those with no experiences of this sort or those whose experiences had been as Abusers. Clearly, the present findings did not bear this out. Rather, while no differences in empathy on the BES emerged among those with no experiences of violence and those who had been Victims-only or Abusers-only, respondents who reported backgrounds in Both roles emerged as signficantly lower in empathy than the remainder of the sample. Any or all of this subgroup's distinguishing characteristics may be relevant to their difference in BES: their current involvement in their violent relationships, the longer duration of these relationships, and/or their more frequent experiences of violence. Interestingly, the fact that a deeper involvement in the experiences at issue is associated with less empathy regarding violence between intimates is in sharp contrast with the situation that appears to prevail in connection with rape, where those who have been victimized or have resisted an assailant are more empathetic (cf. Deitz et al, 1982).

Calling One's Experiences "Battering." Respondents who reported experiences of violence in their intimate relationships were asked to rate the extent to which they considered these events "battering" on a 9-point scale. Most declined to apply the "battering" label to their experiences: only 21% of those who responded rated their experiences above the mid-point toward the "battering" pole, whereas 68% gave ratings below the mid-point, thereby not regarding their experiences as battering, and 11% were noncommittal (at the mid-point).

The three violent experience groups did not differ in their ratings, and preliminary analyses have thus far uncovered only one significant cor-

relate of the self-labelling decision: it is related to the degree of maximum injury suffered by those in victim roles (i.e., Victims and Both/V respondents: $r_V = +.620$, df=10, $p < .025$; $r_{B/V} = +.679$, df=8, $p < .025$), but not to the reported severity of injuries inflicted by respondents in abuser roles (Abusers and Both/A respondents).

Table 4 presents the results of a content analysis of short-answer explanations for the decision about calling one's own experiences "battering." (Since a respondent's explanation was included in any and all applicable explanation categories, the table total exceeds 100%). The results confirm the importance of physical injury as a criterion for applying the "battering" label. Also important among the labelling criteria mentioned were characteristics of the physical abuse itself (particularly its duration and repetitiveness), the underlying motives for the abuse (whether the intention was to physically harm the partner, whether the abuser's anger was justifiable), and the emotional context of the relationship in general.

In summary, respondents declined to use the term "battering" in referring to themselves, and their willingness to use it depended on the seriousness of the injuries involved, especially for those whose experiences of violence were as victims of their partners' abuse.

Reactions to the Case Study: Method of Analysis. Recall that the hypothetical scenario in Part III of the questionnaire occurred in eight different versions according to a 3-way Instructions (2) X Force (2) X Resistance (2) design. In addition to expecting these stimulus dimensions to affect evaluations and perceptions, respondents' sex and level of pre-existing empathy were also expected to influence their reactions. Further, in view of the differences among the four experience groups, one might

reasonably expect that respondents' background experiences with violence would condition their responses to the case study as well. Because a Sex X Experience classification of participants could not be analyzed (as noted earlier, it results in a cell containing only one respondent), separate series of analyses were necessary to assess the influence of these characteristics. The first series, the preliminary results of which are reported here, analyzed the reaction data according to a 5-way design: Battering Empathy (2) X Sex (2) X Instructions (2) X Force (2) X Resistance (2). The second series, still to be completed, will apply a 4-way Experience (4) X Instructions (2) X Force (2) X Resistance (2) framework to the data.

The Battering Empathy classification was based on respondents' BES scores, using a median split method to create High Empathy and Low Empathy groups. However, since earlier analyses had shown that males and females differed in scores on this measure, the median splits were done within each gender. Thus, high Empathy females were those with a BES of 125 or more, while high Empathy males had attained BES scores of 118 and higher.

Because of greatly differing n's within the cells of the 5-way classification (ranging from 2 to 6), it was necessary to use a method of analysis appropriate for this situation. Further, because high capacity computers and sophisticated statistical packages were not available for the preparation of this report, the method used was also computationally straightforward, treating cell means as single observations (cf. Edwards, 1968). Nevertheless, caution is urged in considering the results to be reported below. First, the method, although appropriate and straightfoward, yields only approximate results, so a reanalysis by a more exact and sophisticated method is planned for the near future. Second, due to limited computer access even this analysis has not been entirely completed, so

some of the reported effects may ultimately be qualified by one of the highest-order interactions still to be determined. For these reasons, the findings reported here should be regarded as preliminary.

Calling the Case Study "Battering." Respondents rated the extent to which they considered the incident described in the case study to be "battering" on a 1 ("not at all") to 9 ("completely") scale. The 5-way ANOVA of these decisions revealed a main effect of Force in the expected direction: participants viewed the episode as battering to a greater extent when the abuser used high force ($\bar{X}$=8.68) than when he used low force ($\bar{X}$=7.86), $F(1,93)=9.340$, $p < .01$.

This main effect was qualified by a 2-way Force X Instructions interaction, which is shown in Figure 7, ($F(1,93)=4.471$, $p < .05$). Apparently, the effect of Force on decisions about calling it "battering" only occurs when Empathy Instructions are given. This qualification is reminiscent of the findings associated with calling one's own experiences "battering" where the seriousness of injuries related to the labelling decision only for those who had been victims.

Further qualifying the main effect of Force on labelling decisions here was a significant Empathy X Sex X Force interaction, given in Figure 8, ($F(1,93)=5.432$, $p < .05$). Notice that the labelling decisions of low Empathy (LE) males and high Empathy (HE) females showed diminished effects of the Force factor. While one can understand the HE females' pattern in terms of a ceiling effect (both high and low Force circumstances received ratings extremely close to the maximum possible), the reduced effect in the case of LE males cannot be dismissed as an artifact of the rating scale limits. Rather, it seems reasonable to suppose that this group is less sensitive to the Force used when making judgments about battering situations.

Punishing the Abuser. Participants indicated the extent to which the abuser should be punished for the incident on a 1 ("not at all") to 9 ("a great deal") scale. A 5-way ANOVA of answers to this question has uncovered only a main effect of Force: more punishment was recommended when the abuser used high Force ($\bar{X}$=8.14) than when he used low Force ($\bar{X}$=6.81), $F(1,92)=16.336$, $p < .01$.

Identification with the Victim. Again, using a 1 ("not at all") to 9 ("completely") rating system, respondents indicated the extent to which they felt similar to the case study victim. The 5-way ANOVA on this measure revealed a rather complex combination of influences on identification with Karen M.

Overall, a main effect of Sex emerged ($F(1,93)=4.009$, $p < .05$), with females feeling more similar to the victim ($\bar{X}_F$= 4.58) than males ($\bar{X}_M$=3.53). This effect, however, was qualified by several higher-order interactions.

The 2-way Sex X Instructions interaction was also significant ($F(1,93)=4.137$, $p < .05$) and is shown in Figure 9. The figure reveals a rather paradoxical pattern: males follow the configuration one would expect, demonstrating enhanced empathy with the victim under Empathy instructions, but females react contrary to expectations and actually show somewhat less victim-identification when given Empathy instructions rather than the Standard instruction format. Although surprising at first glance, the higher order interactions, described below, indicate that this reversal only occurs in very limited circumstances.

The 3-way Sex X Instructions X Empathy effect ($F(1,93)=5.229$, $p < .05$) is given in Figure 10. Here, it becomes apparent that the reversal of the expected effect of Empathy instructions occurs only for females who are high in pre-existing Empathy on the issue. An even further restriction on this reversal effect is discussed in connection with the 4-way inter-

action, to be considered shortly.

A second 3-way effect also emerged on the victim-identification measure, the Instructions X Empathy X Resistance interaction ($F(1,93)=7.064$, $p < .01$). Graphed in Figure 11, the interaction reflects the fact that High Empathy respondents actually showed less victim-identification than Low Empathy respondents in one of the four Instructions X Resistance combinations: that is, the case where they received Empathy Instructions and the victim offered Low Resistance to her abuser. This effect, too, is qualified by the significant 4-way interaction.

The 4-way Sex X Instructions X Empathy X Resistance interaction not only qualified all the above-mentioned effects on this victim-identification measure ($F(1,93)=9.5347$, $p < .01$), but it also served to integrate and clarify these less complex effects by revealing that, for each case, the seemingly paradoxical reversal of the expected result occurred only in a very circumscribed combination of conditions. This 4-way effect is graphed in Figure 12. The figure shows that High Empathy respondents claim higher levels of victim-identification than corresponding Low Empathy respondents in all of the eight Sex X Instructions X Resistance conditions save one: High Empathy females given Empathy instructions and low Resistance story circumstances are lower in victim-identification than their low Empathy counterparts. One possible account for this limited exception regards it as a "boomerang" effect of the Empathy instructions in what is an already maximally-empathic group of respondents. Note that under low resistance conditions, females with high pre-existing levels of Empathy show extremely high levels of victim-identification. In the face of Empathy instructions, such a respondent may become overwhelmed and/or resentful of the experimenter's effort to intensify what is an already intense emotional identification for them. Thus, the attempted Empathy instruction manipulation "boomerangs" for these partici-

pants and leads instead to a supression of their identification with the victim. Whatever the source of the effect, however, it clearly cautions researchers in this arena that Empathy instructions to respondents will not necessary have their intended influence on all participants and under all experimental conditions.

Identification with the Abuser. In a parallel question, participants rated the extent to which they felt similar to the abuser in the stimulus story. Not surprisingly, a main effect for Sex was uncovered ($F(1,93)=9.393$, $p < .01$), in which males felt more similar to the abuser than did females ($\bar{X}_M=2.52$, $\bar{X}_F=1.56$).

The Instructions manipulation also produced a main effect on this measure ($F(1,93)=6.712$, $p < .05$), which reflected the unexpected result that respondents felt greater similarity to the abuser under Empathy Instructions ($\bar{X}_E=2.44$, $\bar{X}_S=1.63$). However, this effect was qualified by a signficant 2-way Sex X Instructions interaction ($F(1,93)=5.034$, $p < .05$), shown in Figure 13. As the figure depicts, it is the male participants who feel more similar to the abuser under Empathy instructions. This effect on males is interesting in view of the fact that the Empathy instructions asked respondents to imagine themselves in the place of the victim, or to imagine that the victim was someone they were emotionally close to. Again, the results suggest that Empathy instructions may be of very limited usefulness in research on reactions to battering episodes.

Abuser's Responsibility. The only effect to emerge on this measure was a main effect of Sex ($F(1,93)=7.605$, $p < .01$). Females assigned greater responsibility to the abuser for the incident than did males ($\bar{X}_F=8.60$, $\bar{X}_M=7.86$).

Victim's Responsibility. Although respondents generally assigned very little responsibility to the victim for the incident in the story, a 4-way Sex X Empathy X Instructions X Resistance interaction on this measure indicated that the relative responsibility assigned by the different Sex X Empathy groups varied as a function of the Instructions X Resistance manipulations ($F(1,93)=4.937$, $p < .05$). The graph in Figure 14 illustrates this outcome. In the Standard Instructions/Low Resistance condition and in the Empathy Instructions/High Resistance condition the only differences apparent among the four Sex X Empathy groups are between the High Empathy females, who assign the victim very little responsibility, and the other three groups, who differ little among themselves. Under Standard Instructions and High Resistance by the victim, however, it is the Low Empathy males whose ratings are notably different from those of the other respondents in that they rate the victim as relatively more responsible. While none of these patterns is especially surprising, the configuration in the Empathy Instructions/Low Resistance condition might be puzzling at first glance. There, the intergroup ordering on victim responsibility ratings has both Low Empathy males and High Empathy females offering the higher victim-responsibility ratings. To be sure, the relatively high levels of the Low Empathy males' ratings can be attributed to their low levels of pre-existing empathy. Note, however, that the unexpectedly high ratings by the High Empathy females are also comprehensible when one considers their low identification with the victim in this special combination of circumstances, as described earlier.

Victim's Control. Responses to a question concerning how much control the victim had in the situation revealed a 3-way Sex X Instructions X Resistance effect ($F(1,93)=5.629$, $p < .05$), as shown in Figure 15. Under Standard Instructions, males attribute more control to the victim when

she did not resist, while females ascribed her greater control when she did. This pattern is reminiscent of findings in the literature on fault decisions for rape situations (Krulewitz & Nash, 1979), where males rated the victim as more at fault when she resisted less and females showed the reverse pattern. The interaction with the Instructions factor, however, reveals that Empathy instructions altered this pattern. Males told to empathize with the victim ascribed control like females did under Standard Instructions. On the other hand, the control decisions of females who were told to empathize with the victim transcended the information about the victim's degree of resistance.

Abuser's Intelligence. Respondents' ratings of the abuser's intelligence revealed two significant patterns. The first, a Sex X Resistance interaction ($F(1,93)=5.475$, $p < .05$) is graphed in Figure 16, and indicates that males exposed to Low Resistance situations tended to downgrade his intelligence relative to the other three respondent groups, who accorded the abuser ratings near the scale's mid-point. From the effects reported earlier here, it was clear that males identified more strongly with the abuser, so it is interesting to find that they nevertheless were more critical of him under certain conditions.

The second effect on this measure was a 3-way Sex X Empathy X Instructions interaction, shown in Figure 17, ($F(1,93)=5.342$, $p < .05$). All males and those females with low pre-existing Empathy levels as measured by the BES viewed the abuser as more intelligent under Empathy Instructions than under Standard Instructions. High Empathy females, however, reversed this general pattern: Under Standard conditions, HE females were most generous in rating the abuser's intelligence, but those HE females who received instructions to empathize with the victim offered more critical judgments in this regard.

Abuser's Respectability. Ratings of the abuser's respectability revealed an Instructions X Force interaction ($F(1,93)=4.307$, $p < .05$). As Figure 18 reveals, Instructions made no difference to ratings of the abuser's respectability when he used High Force, but Empathy instructions enhanced perceptions of his respectability when the Force he used was Low.

This interaction was qualified, however, by the 4-way interaction of Sex X Empathy X Instructions X Force, which also emerged as significant, ($F(1,93)=4.985$, $p < .05$). Although complex, the effect is very straightforward and reflects differences among the Sex X Empathy groups in their reactions to the Instructions X Force effect, as shown in Figure 19. Males, regardless of the Empathy level or Instruction condition showed the same pattern: they regarded the abuser as more respectable when he used Low Force than when he used High Force. LE females' ratings showed no effects of Instructions or Force, whereas HE females' ratings depended on both of these factors. Under Empathy instructions, HE females abided by the pattern that governed the males' ratings, but under Standard conditions, their responses were the reverse and they perceived the abuser as more respectable when he used High Force than when he used Low.

Abuser's Immorality and Mental Illness. Two other perception measures regarding the abuser's traits revealed significant effects in the 5-way ANOVA framework, and in each case a main effect of Force emerged. Ratings of the abuser's degree of immorality showed that he was viewed as more immoral under High Force circumstances than under Low ($\bar{X}_H=7.45$, $\bar{X}_L=6.43$; $F(1,93)=9.105$, $p < .01$). Similarly, he was viewed as more mentally ill when he used High Force than when he used Low ($\bar{X}_H=6.51$, $\bar{X}_L=5.31$; $F(1,92)=8.278$, $p < .01$).

Abuser's Violence Motive. Participants rated the degree to which they thought the abuser was motivated by a desire for violence. A main effect of

Instructions on this index ($F(1,89)=4.775$, $p < .05$) stemmed from the fact that the abuser was accorded higher violence-motive ratings by subjects who received Empathy instructions ($\bar{X}_E=6.50$) than by those under the Standard Instructions format ($\bar{X}_S=5.51$). The 3-way interaction of Empathy X Force X Resistance on this measure, shown in Figure 20, was also significant ($F(1,89)=4.326$, $p < .05$). As the figure illustrates, respondents who were Low in pre-existing Empathy perceived more motivation for violence when the abuser's level of Force and the victim's Resistance did not "match" in severity (i.e., HF/LR and LF/HR), but those participants who had high levels of Empathy on the BES reversed this pattern and viewed the abuser as more violence-motivated in LF/LR and HF/HR conditions.

Summary

In view of the multiple phases of this project, the complexity of its design and analyses, and the intricacy of some of the findings that emerged, it will be useful to focus this summary on the central questions that guided the development of this research, which were introduced briefly at the outset of this report.

Calling it "battering." One of the major purposes of the research was to explore the dynamics that govern a person's willingness to term an event or series of events "battering." Three aspects of the findings reported here bear on this question. First, ratings by those with personal experiences of intimate violence concerning their willingness to call their own experience "battering" are an important resource, together with the correlates of these willingness ratings. As noted earlier, most respondents who had had violent experiences declined to call these "battering," and groups who differed in the types of experience they had (victim, abuser, both) did not differ overall in their rated willingness to apply the term "battering" to themselves. Analyses completed to this point have succeeded in identifying only

one significant correlate of the decision to apply the label to oneself: the degree of maximum injury suffered by participants who had been victims appeared to be a determining factor in their decisions. Thus, the more serious the consequence to oneself, the more willing one was to call a personal experience "battering." It was interesting that those in the abuser role were not analogously influenced by the seriousness of the injuries to their partners.

Second, respondents' verbal explanations of their decisions about considering themselves to be "battered" or "batterers" confirmed the importance of physical injury as a criterion for using this label. Other important criteria mentioned in these explanations included the duration and repetitiveness of the physical abuse itself, whether there was an intention to harm, whether the abuser's anger was justifiable, and the emotional closeness of the relationship apart from the violence.

The third and final source of information on the labelling issue were the factors that affected respondents' willingness to call the case study episode "battering." In the hypothetical case studies, the degree of force used by the abuser was coordinated (and hence confounded) with the degree of injury experienced by the victim, as it most likely is in reality. As with personal experiences here, force (and its concomitant consequences) played an important role in determining the willingness to label the hypothetical situations "battering." Respondents were more willing to call it "battering" when the abuser used high force and the victim suffered the more serious consequences. It was remarkable that in these hypothetical circumstances this effect of force (and consequences) appeared only in the context of explicit instructions to empathize with the victim in the story. This qualification introduced a striking parallel with the results on self-labelling, where the association between labelling

and injury occurred only for those whose experiences had actually been in the victim role. Thus, it appears that one important determinant of a victim's willingness to call an episode or series of episodes "battering" is the seriousness of the physical consequences involved.

General Attitudes About Intimate Violence. As indicated in the introduction, another aim of this project was to uncover some of the ways in which general attitudes about violence between intimates may relate to a person's own experiences with such violence and how pre-existing attitudes of this nature can influence reactions to new situations.

A measure of general attitudes about violence between intimate partners, the BES, was developed for this project, derived as an analogue to the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al, 1982). Although further research to establish the validity and reliability of the BES will be necessary before it is a more generally useful tool for research in this area, it did, nevertheless, prove to have adequate internal consistency for use in the current project. As regards its validity, the BES (like the RES) discriminated males from females. Further, it uncovered attitudinal differences among groups who differed in their personal experiences. That is, the BES showed the group of respondents who had had experiences both as victims and as abusers to be lower in empathy than any of the other groups (Victims-only, Abusers-only, and those with no experiences of violence). At the same time, the group with experiences in Both-roles proved (a) more likely to still be in their violent relationships, (b) to have violent relationships of longer duration, and (c) to have had more frequent experiences of violence in their relationships. Thus, the BES appeared to tap into this group's relative acceptance of the use of physical abuse between intimate partners. Overall then, the BES did appear to index general attitudes about violence that are related to one's personal background experiences. It may surprise some that

the pattern of this relation is the opposite to that found in the rape literature, where the more intense one's exposure is to victimization the more empathy one exhibits toward victims (cf. Deitz et al, 1982).

By using the BFS to classify respondents into High Empathy (HE) and Low Empathy (LE) categories and by employing this classification in the analyses of case study responses it was possible to identify how pre-existing attitudes influence reactions to newly-encountered instances of violence between intimates. This strategem revealed that Empathy differences had qualified influences on (1) decisions about calling the stimulus story "battering," (2) identification with the victim in the story, (3) the degree of responsibility assigned to the victim, (4) perceptions of the abuser's intelligence, and (5) ascriptions of respectability to the abuser.

First, pre-existing Empathy, together with respondents' sex, modified the impact that the abuser's force (and severity of consequences) had on decisions about calling the incident "battering." Specifically, males with low levels of pre-existing Empathy seemed genuinely insensitive to the differences in force, while highly empathic females' willingness to call it battering was so high under low force circumstances that there was no way for them to express any greater willingness when the abuser used greater force. The remaining effects of pre-existing Empathy on reactions to the hypothetical stories indicated that the impact of this difference between respondents depended on both the respondents' sex and on whether the specific instructions included directions to empathize with the victim. One intriguing finding in this connection was the pattern referred to as a "boomerang" effect of instructions to empathize, in which females who are already high in pre-existing levels of empathy paradoxically respond directly <u>counter</u> to the empathy directions and reduce their identification with the victim. This

dynamic appeared to influence the degree of identification with the victim as well as the degree of responsibility assigned to the victim. The impact of pre-existing levels of empathy on perceptions of the abuser depended on the abuser characteristics in question. Females with high levels of empathy on the BES were relatively generous concerning the abuser's intelligence ratings compared with other respondents except when they are instructed to empathize with the victim. At the same time, this HE female group differs from other respondents in their view of the relationship between the abuser's level of force and his respectability.

Victim's Reactions. Whether a victim's reactions to an assault are nonviolent or violent might modify an observer's reactions to the event. In fact, the results for respondent reactions to the case study situations demonstrated that the degree of resistance offered by the victim affected (1) identification with the victim, (2) assignments of responsibility to the victim, (3) perceptions of the victim's control in the situation, and perhaps surprisingly, two decisions about the abuser: (4) attributions concerning the abuser's level of intelligence, and (5) beliefs about the degree to which the abuser was motivated by a desire for violence. In each case, the influence of the victim's reactions was conditioned by one or more of the other aspects of the situations.

Respondents' feelings of similarity to the victim depended on her reactions as well as on their sex, their pre-existing levels of empathy, and the instructions about whether to empathize with the victim in the story. As noted, the "boomerang" effect occurred for HE females who were given instructions to empathize under low resistance conditions. At the same time, HE women under standard instructions who had received low resistance situations reported the strongest levels of identification with the victim.

Both pre-existing level of Empathy and Instructions modified decisions about the victim's degree of responsibility. Decisions about the victim's control in the context of Standard Instructions parallelled the findings on ascriptions of fault in rape situations. Under Standard Instructions, males perceived the victim to have more control when she offered low resistance and females perceived her as having more control when her resistance was high. However, under instructions to empathize with the victim, her resistance had exactly the reverse effect on decisions about her degree of control.

As regards attributions of the abuser's characteristics, subjects' sex altered the influence of the victim's resistance on abuser's intelligence ratings. At the same time, respondents' pre-existing empathy levels and the abuser's force in relation to the victim's resistance turned out to be important to the way the abuser's motivation for violence was viewed. Thus, resistance of the victim had a number of complex effects on evaluations of the situation.

Taken as a whole, the findings here indicate that many factors seem to have interactive effects on decisions in this arena. This would suggest that future research consider the simultaneous influence of a variety of factors, despite the complexity that is thereby entailed in both design and analysis.

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Table 1

Battering Empathy Scale

For Questions 1 through 9, rate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement according to the following scale:

Agree Completely 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 Disagree Completely
Neutral

1. In most cases when a woman is physically abused by her mate she was asking for it.

2. Most women are masochistic and secretely desire to be physically abused to some degree.

3. Under certain circumstances, I can understand why a man would use physical force with his partner in an intimate relationship.

4. When a woman acts belligerent and disrespectful toward her partner she must be willing to accept the consequences, including her partner's physical retaliation.

5. It is possible for a woman who is physically attacked by her partner to get psychological satisfaction from the experience of being physically controlled, whether she admist it or not.

6. I can really empathize with the helplessness a person might feel who becomes physically abusive with their partner, since they are at the mercy of forces beyond their control.

* 7. I can really empathize with the helplessness a person might feel who is physically abused by their partner, if all their attempts to avoid the abuse have failed.

8. A husband has the right to enforce his wife's obedience, even if this means using physical force to do so.

* 9. I can understand a wife's humuliation and anger if her husband used physical force against her.

For Questions 10 through 16, rate the degree to which you would select the Victim or the Abuser in a situation of physical aggression in an intimate relationship according to the following scale:

Victim 1 : 2 : 3 : 4 : 5 : 6 : 7 : 8 : 9 Abuser
Both Equally

* 10. I would find it easier to imagine the feelings of the ____ during a battering episode.

11. The _____ must be held accountable for his/her behavior during an argument.

Table 1 (continued)

* 12. I would find it easier to empathize with the shame and humiliation the _____ might feel during a courtroom hearing.

13. In deciding whether an assault has occurred, the burden of proof should rest with the _____. [Note: For the Victim, this means it should be assumed that nothing happened unless they can prove it did; for the Abuser, this means it should be assumed the assault occurred as charged unless they can prove it did not.]

* 14. I think the _____ would suffer more emotional torment in dealing with the police.

* 15. If a hearing on an assault charge were publicized in the press, I feel the _____ would suffer more emotional trauma from the publicity.

* 16. If I were a member of a jury in a trial for assault between intimates, I would probably be more likely to believe the _____'s testimony.

* 17. The situation in which a person uses physical force against their partner in an intimate relationship is

Unjustifiable under any circumstances	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 Justifiable under certain circumstances

*Denotes items requiring reverse-scoring.

Table 2

Partner Violence Scenario, Indicating Instructions, Force, and Resistance Variations

INSTRUCTIONS:	Standard	Empathy
	[Nothing other than to read the material and answer the questions following it].	As you read this case report, imagine that you are Karen M. and that the events in the report are happening to you. If you find this difficult to do, imagine that Karen M. is someone you care for a great deal and that these events are happening to this person you are very close to.
(All versions):	Karen M.'s husband, Frank, burst into the house after work in a rage. He wanted his dinner right away and when he didn't see it on the table, he grabbed her wrists and threw her against the wall. He pinned her against the wall with his hand on her throat.	
FORCE:	Low	High
	[Nothing added].	and punched and kicked her several times.
(All versions):	Karen was terribly frightened and	
RESISTANCE:	Low	High
	just stood there frozen.	she screamed at him to let her go and then kicked him hard.
(All versions):	Then he left and she realized that her neck	
FORCE (continued):	Low	High
	was sore and slightly bruised.	and face were bruised and cut and that she had several painful and swollen areas on her body.

Table 3

Types of Violence Reported by Respondents with Violent Relationships

Type of Violence	% Who Reported it
Smashed, hit, kicked something in anger, while partner was there	80%
Threw something in anger while partner was there, but not at the partner	70%
Pushed, shoved partner	77%
Grabbed, shook partner	73%
Slapped partner with open hand	60%
Threw something at partner in anger	27%
Clawed, scratched, bit partner	27%
Threw partner bodily	27%
Kicked, punched, hit partner with fist	23%
Hit partner with object	10%
Smothered, strangled, choked partner	10%
Threatened partner with weapon	10%
Other (physical restraint)	3%

Table 4

Reasons for Calling/Not Calling Own Experiences "Battering"

Reason	% Who Gave It
Severity of the physical consequences (or lack of it)	47%
Frequency, repetitiveness, duration (or insufficiency)	17%
Mere use of physical force	10%
Emotional closeness of the relationship in general	10%
Intention to hurt (or its absence)	7%
Justifiability/understandability of the abuser's anger	7%
Controllability of the abuser's actions (lack of)	3%
[No explanation offered for labelling decision]	23%

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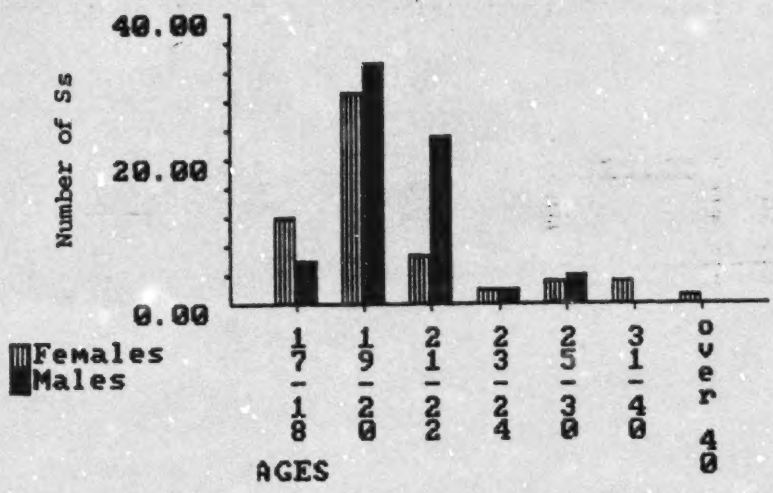

Figure 1. Age distributions of males and females in the respondent sample.

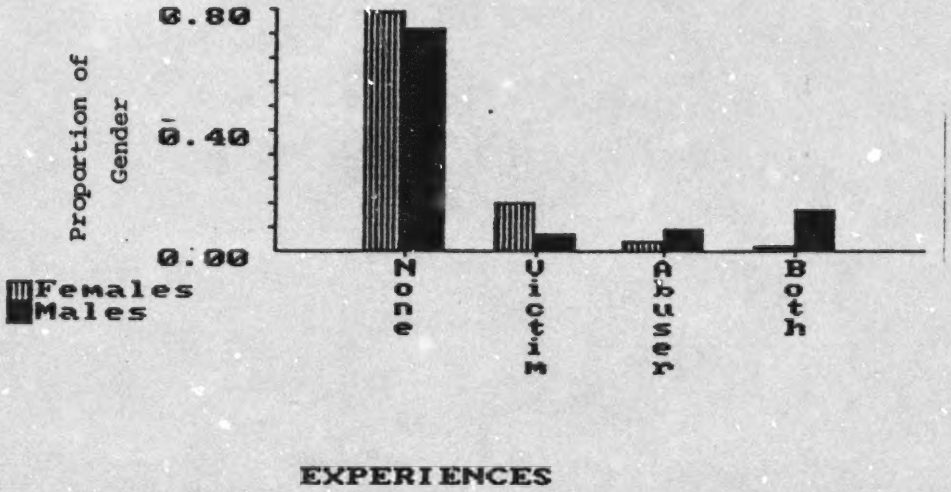

Figure 2. Proportions of each gender reporting experiences with violence in intimate relationships.

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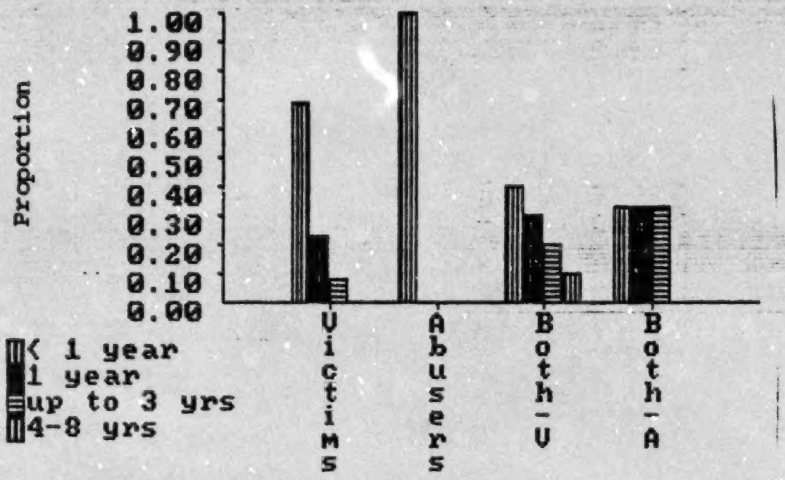
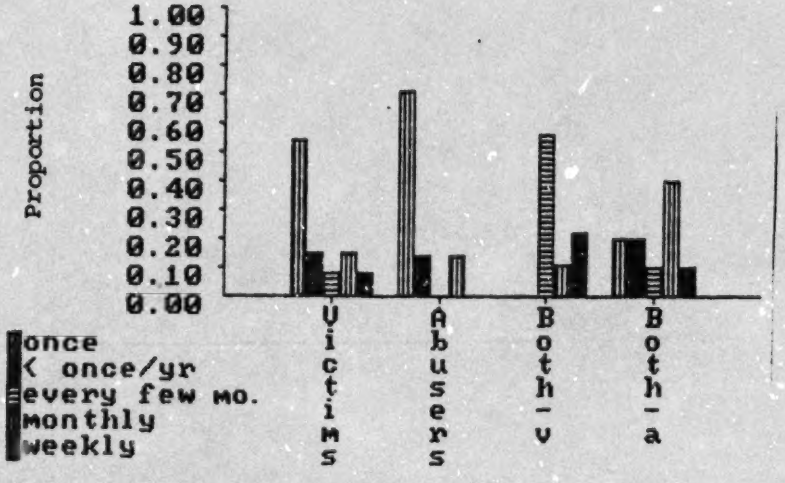


LENGTH

Figure 3. Length of the violent relationship for respondents in the different experience groups.



FREQUENCY

Figure 4. Frequency of violent episodes as reported by the different experience groups.

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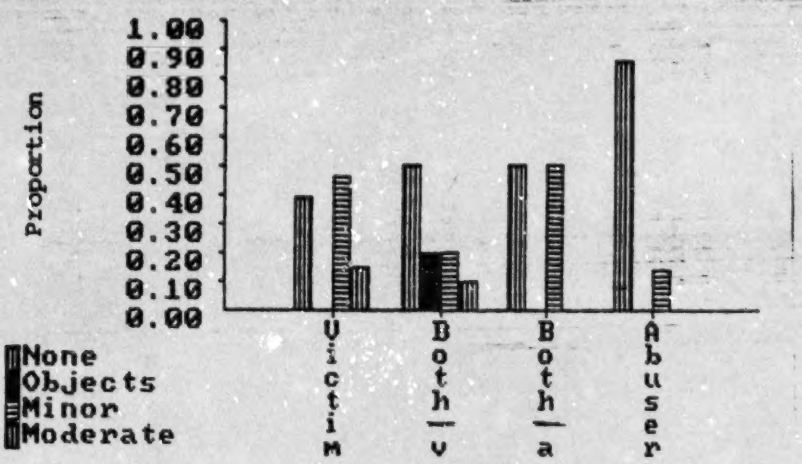

Figure 5. Most serious injury suffered (as victim) or inflicted (as abuser) by the different groups.

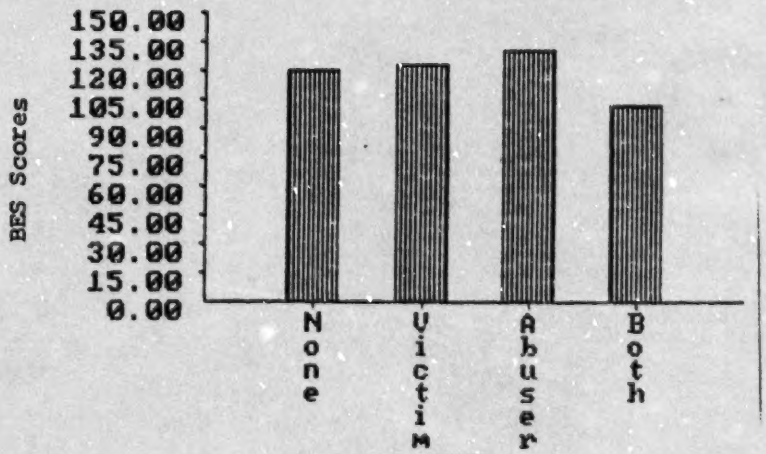

Figure 6. Average BES scores for groups with different experiences of violence with an intimate partner.

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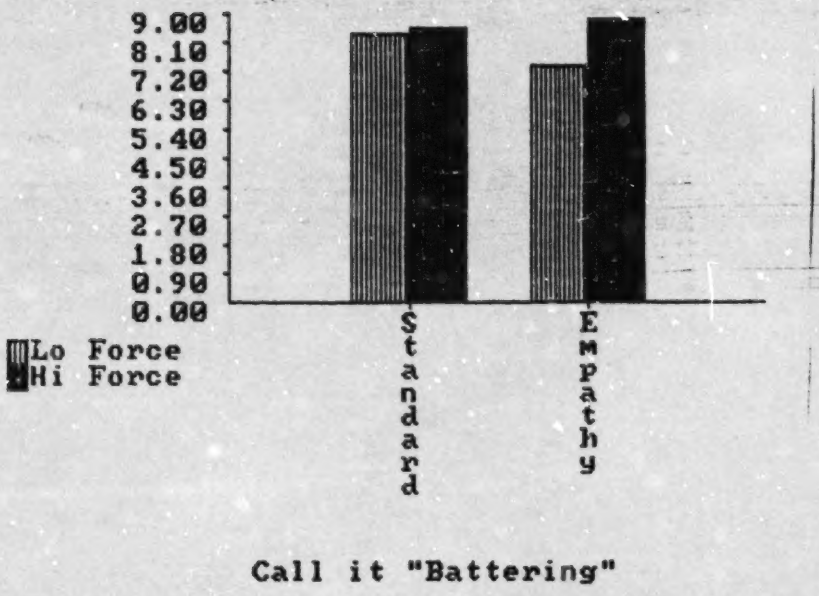

Figure 7. The Instruction X Force interaction effect on the extent to which the case incident was considered "battering."

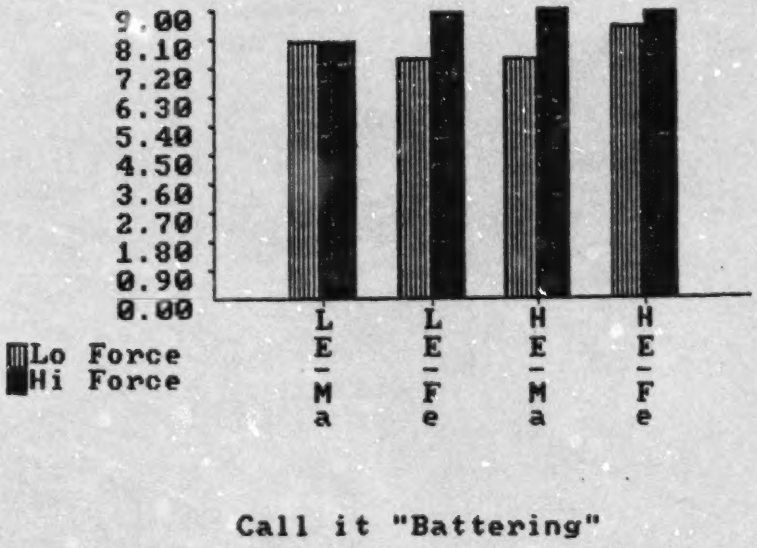

Figure 8. The Empathy X Sex X Force interaction effect on decisions about calling the case study incident "battering."

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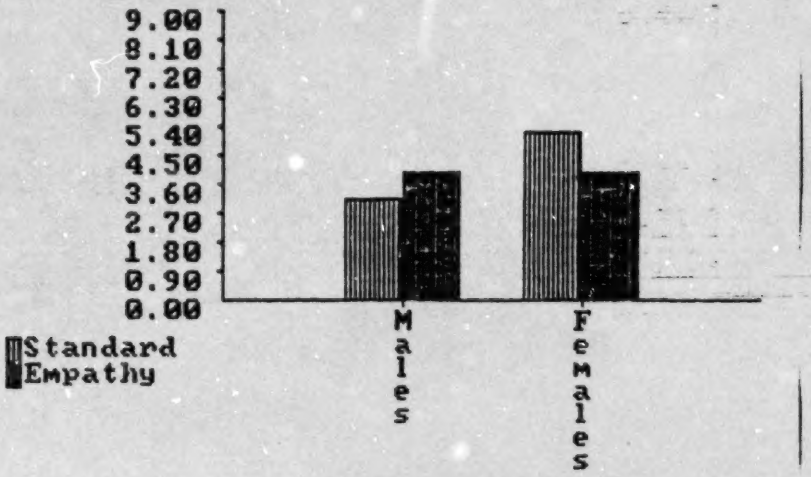

Figure 9. Sex X Instructions effect on victim-identification ratings.

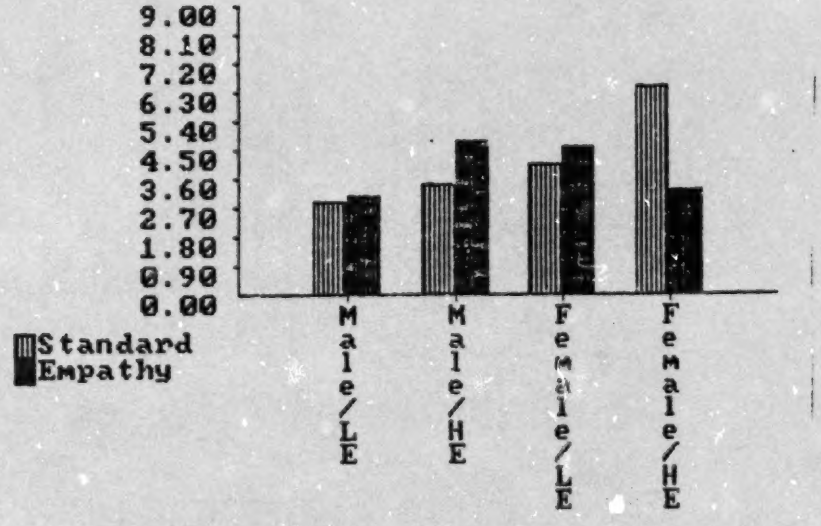

Figure 10. Sex X Instructions X Empathy effect on identification with the victim.

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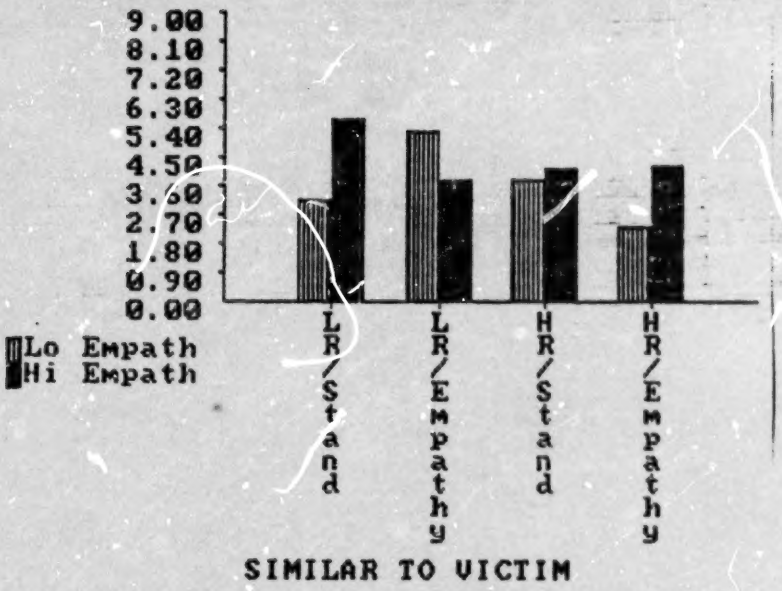

Figure 11. Instructions X Empathy X Resistance interaction effect on identification with the victim.

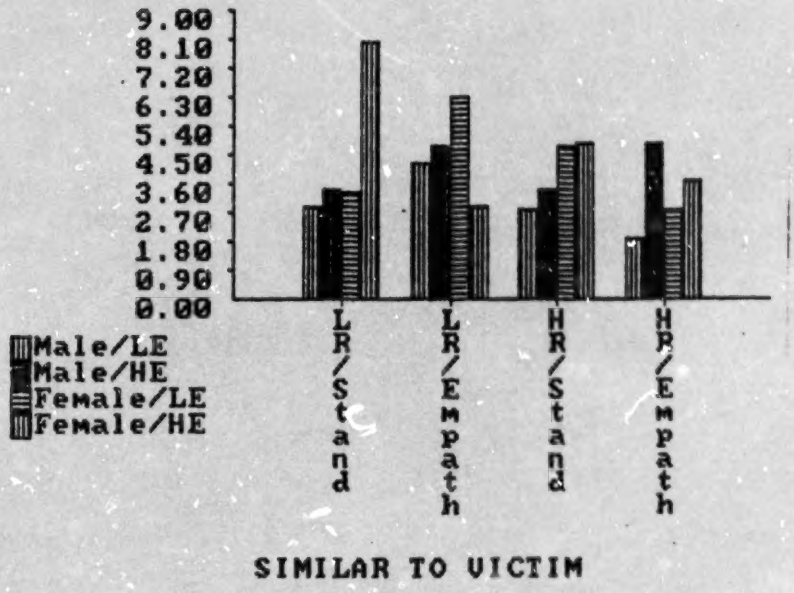

Figure 12. The 4-way Sex X Instructions X Empathy X Resistance interaction on the measure of victim-identification.

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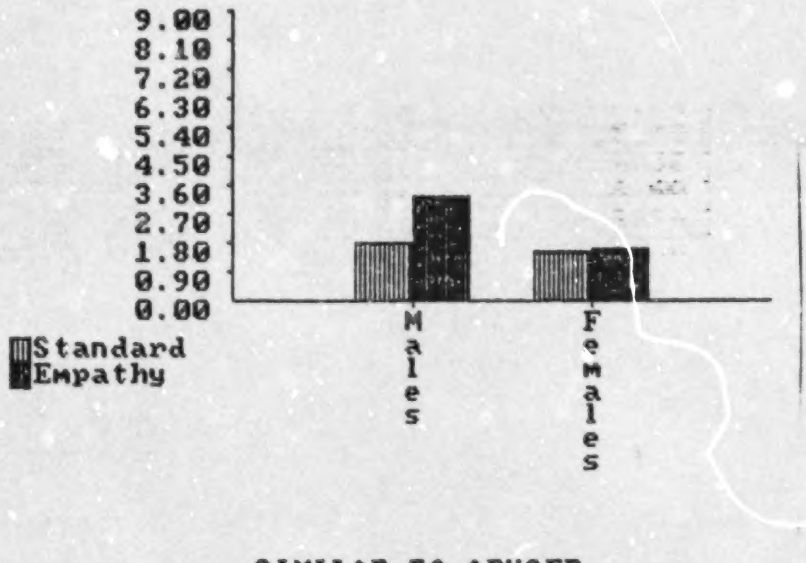

Figure 13. Sex X Instructions interaction on feelings of similarity to the abuser.

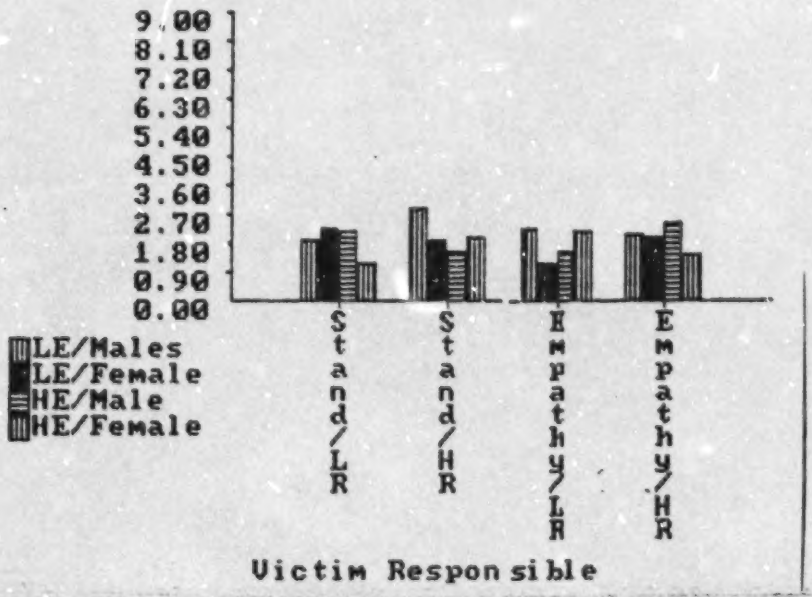

Figure 14. Sex X Empathy X Instructions X Resistarce effect on ratings of the victim's responsibility.

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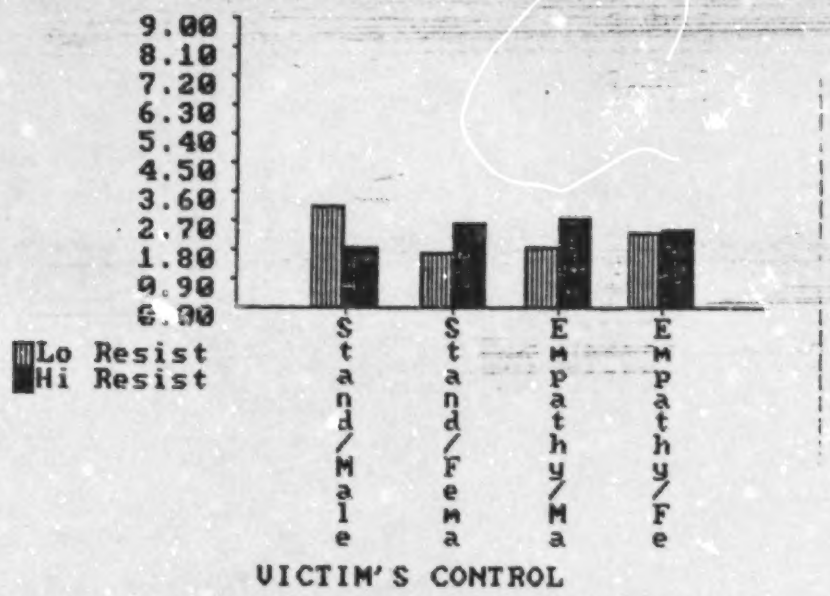

Figure 15. Sex X Instructions X Resistance effect on ratings of the victim's control in the situation.

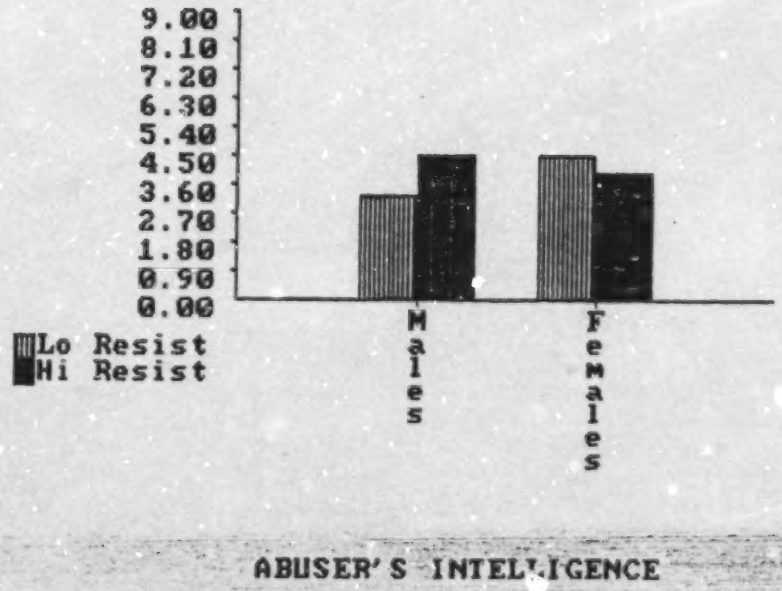

Figure 16. Sex X Resistance effect on ratings of the abuser's intelligence.

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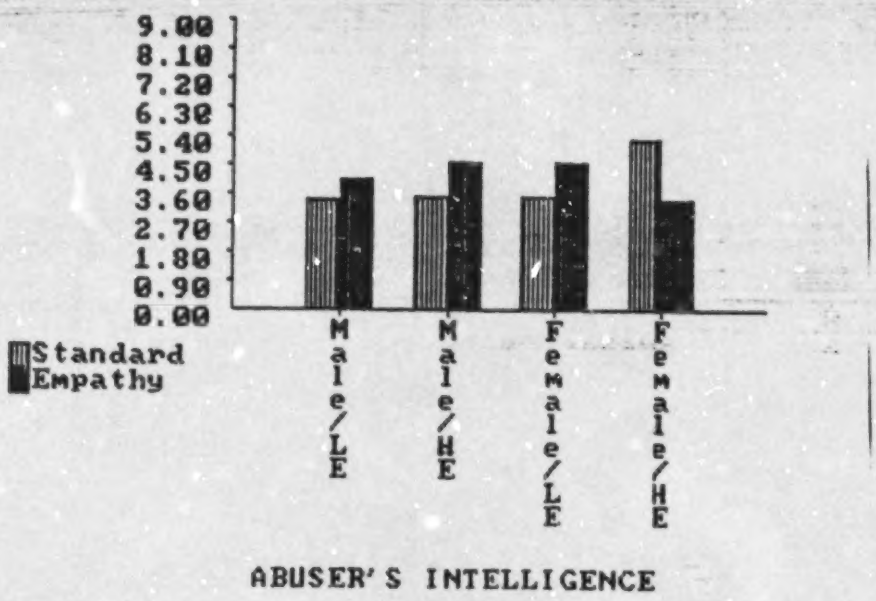

Figure 17. Sex X Empathy X Instructions interaction on perceptions of the abuser's intelligence.

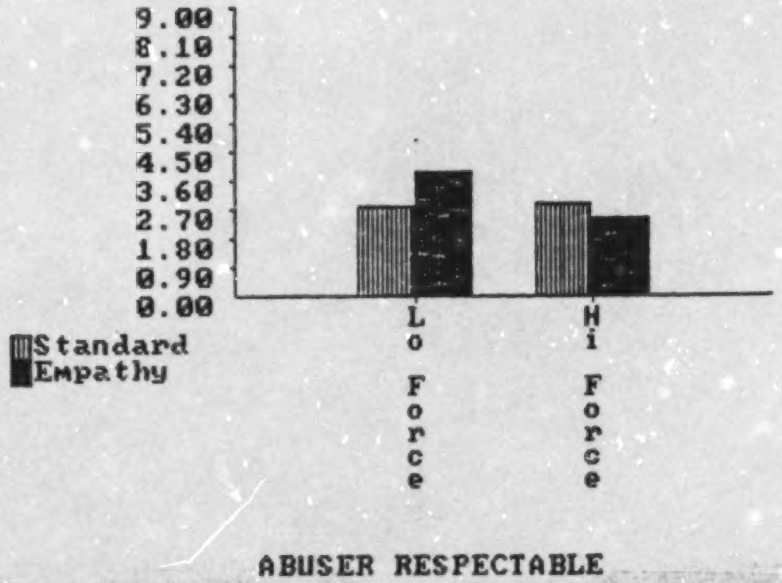

Figure 18. Instructions X Force interaction effect on judgments of the abuser's respectability.

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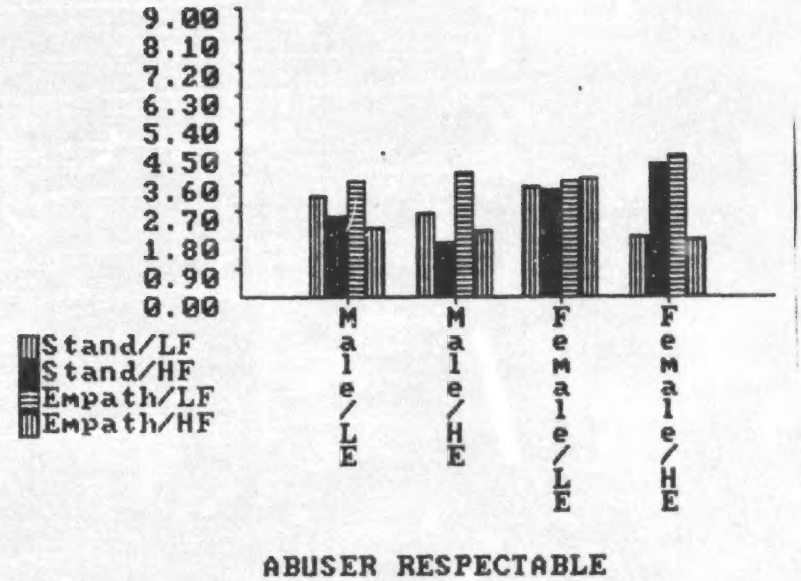

Figure 19. Sex X Empathy X Instructions X Force interaction on perceptions of the abuser's respectability.

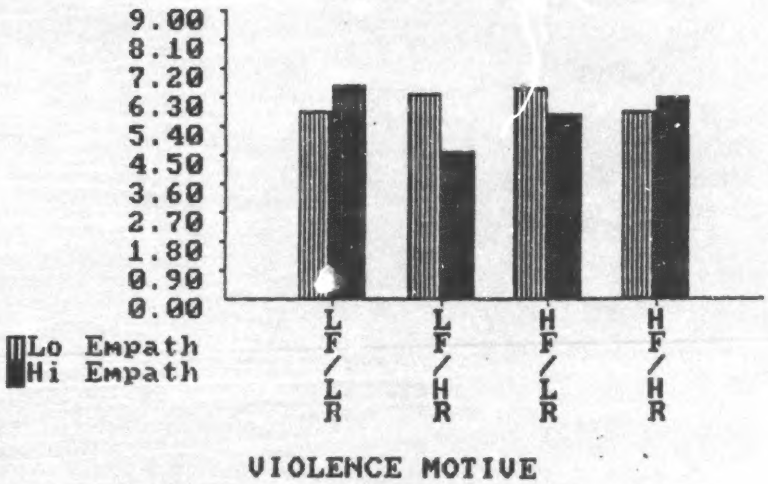

Figure 20. Empathy X Force X Resistance effect on ratings of the degree to which the abuser was motivated by a desire for violence.

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